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Oto, Yoshio

Interview

ca. 1981-1982

(Thomas Sawada)

83/115

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Mr. Thomas Sawada # 212

March 12, 1945?

Born 1920

Lives in Oakland, Cal.

Goshio  
OTO  
Uyeda

TS: Hello?

RW: Hello, is this Mr. Sawada?

TS: Speaking.

RW: This is Professor Rosalie Wax, and I talked to your wife over the weekend and she suggested that I call at this time.

Dr. Uyeda gave me your name as a reference, because I am doing, ~~how should I put it~~, I'm interviewing people who experienced Tule Lake, just to write a report for the Rockefeller Foundation. I am a retired professor and I experienced it myself, I was at Tule Lake for almost 2 years myself.

TS: Was it after the evacuation?

RW: Yes.

TS: I mean after segregation.

RW: After segregation I came.

TS: You ~~must~~ <sup>should</sup> know quite a bit about it.

RW: I do, and my reason is to see how people who were there, think about it now and how they are getting along. So when people tell me stuff I know what they are talking about. That I can say.

TS: Well, I didn't know what you wanted to know.

RW: Well, a kind of life history. I'll ask you questions and then if anything else occurs to you, why tell me, and I'm not using any names on these, It's all anonymous and so, how should I say, if I ask a dumb question, tell me that too. This is sort of you and nobody else's. Let me see, thinking back before the days of World War II, how would you describe your life, where were you living and so on?

TS: I was born and raised in Sacramento.

RW: Oh in Sacramento. And how did your parents <sup>earn</sup> ~~get~~ their living?

TS: They were ~~in~~ farming.

RW: And, let me see, what year were you born?

TS: 1920.

> RW: And so, let me see, by 1940, what kind of schooling did you have?

TS: I finished Junior College.

RW: You finished Junior College and what were your hopes for the future. ~~What did.~~ What were you planning to be?

TS: Well, I was planning to go to University of California.

RW: Oh, did you have any profession ~~or~~ ... ?

TS: Studying international trade and accounting.

RW: So you had applied to <sup>U.C.</sup> ~~U.C.~~ at Berkeley? <sup>TS: uh-huh. RW:</sup> That's where I went too. ~~Let me see,~~ Now I'd like to ask a little about the

evacuation. Could you tell me how you felt when you heard the government announcement ~~that~~ that Japanese American people had to leave their homes and go into Assembly Centers?

TS: Well, I mean, that was a terrible thing for them to <sup>present</sup> ~~announce~~, but I think there was a lot of economical, how should I say, jealousy among some of the farmers. [Caucasian]

RW: Yes, <sup>helped</sup> ~~that's what~~ caused it. But what was your reaction when you heard about this?

TS: I thought it was terrible. We couldn't travel more than <sup>five</sup> miles, we couldn't get things done and we were just at the verge of making some money and we had to go. ~~I didn't think that~~ ...

They said there were going to be some subversive things going on, <sup>but</sup> I didn't think that was going to happen.

RW: I agree. That was vicious propaganda.

TS: Political move I thought.

RW: Yes. A number of <sup>Nisei</sup> people I've talked to <sup>have</sup> told me, ~~like you~~  
~~were a nisei, and they say~~ <sup>that</sup> they just couldn't believe it when  
they heard they were going to be put in camps.

TS: <sup>Yes,</sup> We were registered for the draft and everything and <sup>why</sup> should  
they throw us around like that.

RW: You were ~~A~~ American citizens.

TS: That's right.

RW: You are.

TS: <sup>I sure am.</sup> ~~That's what I am.~~ I was going to fight it to the end.

RW: Exactly. Now let's see, I'll ask about <sup>to which</sup> ~~the assembly,~~ let  
~~me see, what~~ Assembly Center did they send you?

TS: Wal~~x~~erga.

RW: About that Assembly Center, what do you recall most strongly?

TS: I was a young man and I was interested in girls.

RW: Aha, (laughs)

TS: (laughs)

RW: So, it wasn't all bad, if one could at least say that  
little thing.

TS: I forget how many thousands were there, but the thing that  
really got us, the point that got to me was why we were being  
treated this way, you know? When we got there, we were sleeping  
on straw mattresses and provisions weren't provided with the  
situation. It was terrible.

RW: Yeah, it was a very bad place. Was there any particular  
incident that happened that makes you particularly feel sad  
when you think about it?

TS: I wasn't frightened or anything like that, but I know the administration was stealing money.

RW: ~~Oh gosh~~, I've heard that from other people.

TS: You know, we were suppose to get clothing scripts and all that stuff, They were charging us, They were making the money, It was suppose to be free and they would charge us.

RW: And it was suppose to be free, but they made you pay for these things?

TS: That's right.

RW: Gosh, that sort of insult after terrific injury.

TS: That's right. I mean there was 3 ~~32~~) to buy incidental things, you know it wasn't much, \$3.75 ~~or~~ something like that.

And you know we need incidental things, Everybody wasn't rich, I for one was a poor one. The script was \$3.75, <sup>amounted to a lot of money</sup> well, I said to some people, it really meant something to them because they had no money to buy anything, So I mean, but we had to pay for it and the administration is keeping the money. I mean that kind of stuff. The government should have had a better personnel.

RW: That was a bad beginning.

TS: We found out later that we were suppose to get it for nothing.

RW: Yes. ~~See~~.

TS: But what could we do, because that's how it was.

RW: That is really kind of disgusting thing.

TS: There was some graf<sup>t</sup> ~~work~~ and all that.

RW: Well, is there anything else in Assembly Center life that you could tell me about?

TS: Well, we were, you know, as far as I'm concerned, it was one indefinite thing, <sup>that</sup> we didn't know where we were going to be pushed around to some more after that.

RW: ~~Oh yeah, I could ask,~~ Did you go with your parents, and brothers and sisters?

TS: Yeah, <sup>we evacuated</sup> as a family.

RW: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

TS: I have 3 other brothers and 3 other sisters.

RW: At least that was some help, you weren't there all alone.

TS: Yeah, we were together.

RW: Can you remember how you felt when they told <sup>you</sup> that you were going to be sent to a relocation camp?

TS: Yeah, they kept us wondering where we were going to go though.

RW: You were kept wondering.

TS: And when the decision came of Tule Lake, we felt we were still in California, so pretty good.

RW: Oh, did you feel that way when you saw Tule Lake?

TS: I don't know. I just felt it was a ~~place in the~~ wilderness place, you know, no surroundings or nothing. It was such that when we first got there, we said, "What a dusty place."

RW: It was ~~really~~, I know. I never had to eat so much dust. Which of the things that happened to you or your experiences in Tule Lake do you recall most strongly, what is most vivid?

TS: Well, the one thing<sup>s</sup> that really got us is that signing that loyalty and disloyalty forms.

RW: I'm sorry I didn't get that.

TS: You know they tried to qualify you whether you're loyal or disloyal. They came with that form.

RW: Military registration, they called it.

TS: ? ~~(325)~~ to it.

RW: Yes.

TS: Well, anyway, actually we walked out on the sergeant because he said it was voluntary and not required. We said nothing doing. So we didn't pay any attention to it. I mean our block did anyway. They were trying to make a decision on a piece of paper, that's not what I wanted. Because I could have said "yes, yes" and got out and you know if I wanted to sabotage something, I could do that. But I mean that's not the way I felt. So I mean we didn't sign up at all. Primarily I didn't want the government to push us around anymore, especially bearing arms.

RW: Could you say it was a kind of protest?

TS: Oh yeah. Since you were there after the evacuation, you probably know some of the circumstances that were aroused over there.

RW: Oh yes.

TS: I mean after segregation, I mean the problem was terrible. Were you at the administration?

RW: Pardon me?

TS: Were you at the administration building?

RW: I was sent there because I was with the University of California Evacuation Study. So I was a kind of mature college student and I had to live in the administration quarters 'cause they wouldn't let me into the camp. You know when I first got there, they told me I had to take a soldier with me. And I said words to the effect, "Hell no" I wouldn't do that.

TS: What month did you come?

RW: I came after the people stopped the strike, you know.

TS: You mean there ~~was a~~ <sup>farm</sup> strike?

RW: Yeah, ~~the hunger strike~~. It was a farmers strike and so I got there I think the first or second of February, 1944.

TS: Oh that's when the strike was still going on, we were going on curfews.

RW: No, the strike went on through 1943 and then ended 1944.

TS: Well, you see the thing is this, when the evacuation was completed, the people from the other camps stormed the administration building.

Remember that one?

RW: I wasn't there then. I didn't get there until it was all over and they had the Coordinating Committee, remember that?

TS: Uh huh.

RW: I was there until, ~~oh~~, from February 1944 through this business of supposed ~~and~~ <sup>inn</sup> getting beaten up and then the beginnings of what they called the ~~hosidan~~ <sup>Koshi-dan</sup> and all that.

TS: ~~Hosidan~~ <sup>Koshi-dan</sup> washo, washo. (laughs)

RW: And on until the renunciation of citizenship business, so that was the time I was there.

TS: Oh, I see. The thing is I don't know if you were versed on why the curfew came about.

~~RW: The what came about?~~

~~TS: The curfew.~~

RW: Oh the curfew. That I know..I talked to a lot of people, and what I was told was <sup>that</sup> first of all there was this big warehouse, this fight because the people believed..the Japanese Americans believing that the administration was giving their food to the strike breakers.

TS: Yeah, that came to the ~~farm~~ <sup>farm</sup>

RW: And then Mr. Best called in the Army and then after that there was supposed to be a mass meeting. Let me see this fight was on the night of November 4th, the Army was called in and then there was supposed to be a mass meeting at which the Colonel Austin would talk to the Japanese Americans.

ES: Well that was prior to that.

RW: Oh prior to that?

TS: They stormed the administration.. I worked in the finance department so we got chased out.

RW: Oh that was the November 1st thing.

TS: Yeah, the 1st or 2nd.

RW: Was this sort of Kibei coming in and..

TS: The thing is they formed this rugged committee..

RW: Yes, the <sup>Daihyo Shuikai</sup> dayo shaki, the negotiating..

TS: Kurotomi and that bunch.

RW: The what?

TS: Kurotomi.

RW: Yes, Kurotomi.

TS: I guess they had more offered to them than in the other camp than they did <sup>with</sup> ours. And they said the facilities are bad and all that, but there were some other incidents that went on besides that.

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RW: What was the story behind this?

TS: What's that?

RW: You were telling me..

TS: Oh yeah, well see they formed a committee from the leaders that came from the other camps and they wanted to demand something so, you know, I really ~~did~~ <sup>Dillon Meyer</sup> ~~you know~~ admire <sup>you know</sup> for keeping everybody calm because there were a lot of people out there. And they wanted..I don't know what sort of negotiation they went through, but I know they were demanding changes for better facilities/<sup>be provided</sup> and all this kind, I mean this is easy thing. But the army tanks were rolling at that time and thousands of people surrounded the administration. Then finally <sup>Dillon Meyer</sup> ~~(11)~~ calmed it down and it all came out and we went home. Things like that did happen. But you know another thing too, some of the committee members were trying to make money with this incident.

RW: Was trying to make money?

TS: Yeah.

RW: Gee, I didn't know that.

TS: We were ~~on~~ <sup>in</sup> the payroll, see so we know this transaction, trying to collect 5¢ off of every paycheck.

RW: I'll be darned.

TS: Isn't that a lot of money and you know how many checks we were writing too.

RW: Gosh.

TS: Yes, it was terrible. Things like this went on, see, and then when the farm incident turned up with the ~~army~~ tanks coming in that night, I mean everything fell apart.

RW: I heard about people trying to make money..well, I'll get to that later. ~~I..let me see..now I'll ask a happy note~~, Was there anything that you or other people did at Tule Lake that makes you feel really good today when you think about it?

TS: Well, only thing, I..for myself you know I was trying to forget the bad part of the thing because there is always a brighter side of the story. See, what I did was I strongly stayed with the church movement and I did whatever I can: I was a Sunday school teacher and sometimes the Reverend<sup>s</sup> got out on strike and they say they are not going to show up, so here I took the Reverend's part, and things like this. For my end I think, socially I think I had accomplished a lot of things that I would have never done before.

RW: These Reverends who were there were helpful.

TS: Yeah, they were very helpful in the sense, But see some of the Reverends didn't want to move unless they got paid, and who has that kind of money in camp?

RW: Were these the Buddhist Reverends or the Christians?

TS: Yeah, the Buddhist Reverends.

RW: The Buddhist Reverends were helpful to you.

TS: See, from that standpoint, well I have improved my character in standing in front of people and trying to assist them and things like this. I use to be shy.

RW: But this helped you. Tell you the truth, I'm shy, I get scared everytime, even now before I do an interview, I don't know why. But I do it anyway because I feel I am obligated to do an honest job. Was there anything that happened at Tule Lake that made you feel especially angry?

TS: Well, the thing is this, on that basis there, you know, after that November 4th incident, you see the thing is the curfew came on. Couldn't get out from 6:00 in the morning to

7:00 at night. ~~It~~ left you wondering after that. And then they were trying to catch up with one leader, you know, so they couldn't find him. So what they did is they put in the military and they went from one end to another looking for the fellow. I guess you know that part.

RW: Oh yes, I know ~~all about...~~ I know. <sup>even</sup> In fact I <sup>^</sup> talked with Kurotomi, so I know what was going on. He was one of the guys hiding you know.

TS: Somebody hiding and couldn't catch up with. But anyway, that went on and, let's see, what else happened after that? Well, they caught up with some of the people there anyway.

~~RW: They did what?~~

~~TS: They..I think they found one of the people.~~

RW: Yes, ~~I think they did~~, you were saying that you were angry about this house to house search that they made?

TS: Oh yeah. Well, the thing is that I don't mind that part <sup>gth</sup> ~~about~~ the situation, because I wasn't pro-Japanese. I was pro-American.

RW: Did you say "No, No," or did you just refuse? <sup>?</sup>

TS: I didn't sign it.

~~RW: I beg your pardon?~~

~~TS: I didn't sign it.~~

RW: You refused to answer. That's what I thought. I wanted to check that.

TS: And then you know there was a lot of incidents..I'm going to go back a little bit, okay?

~~RW: I beg your pardon?~~

~~TS: I said I'm going to go back a little bit now.~~

RW: Yes.

TS: Why our feelings was we didn't want to sign was because it wasn't required. It was not commanded that we do it, so we didn't do it.

RW: That's good reasoning.

TS: So my brother and I we didn't do it and one block really got subversive about that. They didn't want to sign either, you know, and they threw the policeman out or something like that. They rounded up some of the boys and took them to the CCC camp.

RW: I'll be darned.

TS: We were all prepared. My brother and I had our suitcase packed and if they came..they said they were going to round up all the non-signers, you know. We were prepared to be taken out, but nobody came. So these are some of the things, I said if they want to let us go that's all right, but the things is after that when the military searched the place. Well, the things is you know, when they rounded up all the leaders, the way I found out, is some innocent people were rounded up too. And some of the leaders <sup>den</sup> were dan jiki, you heard of that? They went on starvation.

RW: Yes, the hunger strike.

TS: Yeah, the hunger strike. Well some of the leaders were eating vitamin pills.

RW: Vitamin pills?

RW: Oh yeah, while they were on the hunger strike?

TS: How you like that?

RW: I got to hand it to them. (laughs)

TS: The innocent ones are starving like mad and this is not right. So one night I lived in ward I, so I was in ward II so

<sup>I</sup>~~we~~ said we get picked up and see what's going to be like,  
you know. So after 7:00 I crossed the fire break-in, <sup>and went into</sup> ~~(101)~~  
~~to~~ the ward I area and here come the GP's, <sup>he says</sup> ~~saying~~ "What are you  
doing here, you know you are passed the curfew hour?" And I  
said "So what, are you going to take me in?" He said, "Where  
do you live?" I said, "Right there." He said, "Better go  
home, don't let me catch you again." (laughs) I deliberately  
did that to see what was going on in that <sup>?</sup> ~~(105)~~ stockade.

RW: They were afraid you were going to communicate with  
somebody in the stockade?

TS: I don't know. I didn't tell them that. I said..

I was breaking the curfew hour, so I thought they were going  
to take me in. ~~He~~ didn't take me in.

~~RW: Now let's see, stockade went on a long time.~~

~~TS: Sure did.~~

RW: Do you remember the business of a number of men were  
supposed to be <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ and they got beaten up, there were about  
6 or 7 and then Mr. Hatomi was murdered?

TS: He was killed.

RW: What did you think about that?

TS: The thing is my thinking is I never thought Japanese  
people would have bad feelings among each other, you know  
what I mean?

RW: Yeah.

TS: The worst thing that I felt was when the evacuation  
started, I mean after the segregation, <sup>so-called Hoshi-dan</sup> ~~Okay, this hoshidan~~  
group started. Now they are separating the pro-American Niseis

like us and people who came from Japan. They talked them into joining this organization.

RW: Oh, they talked you into joining?

TS: Yeah. Some innocent ~~M~~iseis and they didn't know what it was all about.

RW: ~~Yeah, I know. Do you remember what time you joined? Cause~~  
I know they kept propaganding for a long time.

TS: Yes, the thing is, it was right after the segregation, so..  
evacuation ended about October, I guess..November..in that time.

RW: Yes, October and..I know they started a young <sup>2</sup>man's associa-  
tion at first to study Japanese culture, ~~and~~ ..

TS: Yeah, I went to Japanese school though.

RW: ~~What did they call this?~~ The ~~Se~~<sup>So</sup>kokoku Seiden-dan?

TS: No that's something else. I don't know anything about  
that one. Another thing is that the ~~hoshidan~~<sup>Hoshi-dan</sup> group split again.  
There was one and then they split because their ideas didn't  
click or something like that. So anyway they came over to our  
place to see if we would join them. I said "Don't bother us.  
We have our own ways of doing things, you do your way, I do  
my way." And my feelings on that is why is it that they can't  
think in one unison way. Because why were we there? We  
weren't there for just ~~having~~ trying to go back to Japan, and  
we weren't there for that kind of purpose.

RW: ~~And they wanted to be separted from the. what did they~~  
~~call it..the "yes,yes" the "no,nos."~~

TS: ~~That's right.~~

RW: The resegregation, they called it. And you joined it at  
first?

TS: No, I didn't join it.

RW: Oh, I misunderstood you. You just told them to go away.

TS: That's right.

RW: Of course, a lot of people went to Japanese school.

TS: Oh yes, I went to Japanese school because I figure knowledge is better than nothing.

RW: Oh <sup>yes</sup> ~~yeah~~.

TS: I couldn't understand Japanese too well.

RW: And it was something to do, because there is nothing else to do.

TS: That's right. In the evenings we spent <sup>two</sup> 2 hours of school learning Japanese, you know what I mean? It was okay. I enjoyed it.

RW: Did you have a job?

TS: I was in the payroll department for, I don't know, <sup>two</sup> 2 years.

~~RW: I didn't get that one.~~

~~TS: I was in the payroll department.~~ Doing auditing and after that ..I..kind of tired, so I went to the welfare department - interviewing welfare people.

RW: I knew Mrs. <sup>Deschin</sup> ~~Dessen~~ there who was head for a while.

TS: Yes, she was there.

RW: There are a couple of things special I would like to ask: Was there any person <sup>at</sup> ~~in~~ Tule Lake who you very much respected?

TS: Oh. On what grounds?

RW: Well, ~~that you feel~~, if you had a really bad problem and wanted advice of a honest, human man, or woman, who would you go to?

TS: I use to know a lady by the name of Mrs. Cooper. She was a nice lady. I never depended on somebody to give me advice

because I had my own..myself, you know. Do you remember the time after the segregation, the Army came in and gave notice that you must report for induction?

~~RW: You must report to what?~~

~~TS: For induction.~~

RW: For induction. No.

TS: You don't know about that?

RW: That must have been very much later. ~~May be I had left~~  
by that time.

TS: ~~Well, I don't know, but any way.~~ <sup>Sixty-three</sup> ~~60~~ persons were given notice to appear for induction.

RW: Oh yes, I remember that ~~now~~.

TS: And then they took them to Altur<sup>a</sup> and the judge ruled in favor of the 63, saying that they are confined in the concentration camp and they came back.

RW: Yes.

TS: Well, my feelings were, I'm not doing <sup>anything</sup> anymore for the government, if I don't have to do it. And if there is any forced issue, I want to fight it. So I kept my citizenship and I wasn't going to do anything about it. I know if I had to bear arms    ?    ~~(1964)~~ and I figured if I stayed in Tule Lake, no government forces would come and get me. And that's another reason why I stayed in Tule Lake. I mean why should I?

RW: How did you feel about this renunciation of citizenship business?

TS: That was a poor thing. I mean that incident <sup>s</sup>hould never

have been bought up. I feel sorry for some of them who were forced to go back to Japan and pay a lot of money to get their citizenship back and all that. That's the reason why my feelings were worse against some of the Japanese people, you know, because that <sup>F17shi-don</sup> ~~Hoshidan~~ group bought it up pretty strongly and some innocent Nisei renounced it and..I'm glad the government was lenient though. They gave them a chance and said, "Are you sure you want to renounce?"

RW: It took a long time, but they did get a chance<sup>to</sup>...

TS: They got a chance to change their mind about it. You see. My angry thoughts about that incident are, there were a lot of Issei, you know who the Isseis are? . well, there were a lot of Isseis, who strongly advised their kids to renounce and all this and that and they were pro-Japan and <sup>they would</sup> try to get all the Niseis to renounce and go back to Japan. But you know after the war, they changed their minds and they're out, they're here! I can't understand. That was the most griping thing that I faced, because they were the ones who heckled us, they knew that we were not registered; they knew we weren't thinking their way and all that stuff. Well, so I said we got tiresome.

RW: And they..

TS: They turned around and they were free here now. Those boys that were living next door, they <sup>didn't</sup> renounced their citizenship but the government put a question mark on it. Okay and then after that they went back to Los Angeles, what did their boys do? - volunteer into the Army, just to get schooling. How do you like that. I can't understand that.

RW: I've talked to many people who had renounced and then volunteered for the Army.

TS: I mean I wouldn't do that. This is the reason I say if I'm going to fight it, I'm going to fight it as a citizen not as a renounced alien.

RW: Good for you. I like that.

TS: I convinced a lot of my friends to do that so we all went out after we knew that Japan gave up. We were free to go to the Eastern borders, so we took off.

RW: I know that even some..there was an older Nisei I knew who advised boys to renounce and he didn't renounce.

TS: That's right. There were some of them who were leaders of the ~~Hoshidan~~ <sup>Hoshi-dan</sup>.

RW: He was one of the leaders of the ~~Hoshidan~~ <sup>Hoshidan</sup>.

TS: Yeah, and one of the leaders of the ~~Hoshidan~~ <sup>Hoshi-dan</sup> said that if Japan loses they are going to hara-kiri, you know.

RW: (laughs)

TS: (laughs)

RW: He said he would do that. But I notice he didn't.

TS: He's here.

RW: You mean he's living in California now?

TS: I don't know if he is in California, but anyway he didn't go back <sup>[to Japan]</sup>.

RW: ~~No, he didn't go back.~~ There were people like that and that was kind of tough. How did you cope with this, this sort of pressure yourself? You and your brothers.

TS: OH, we..the thing is we just did things for ourselves, ~~A~~ And you know, if they want to come around and bother us, we would just chase them out.

RW: Oh good.

TS: We ~~used~~ to do that.

RW: You were in better shape there because you had a number of grown men, who could sort of stand together.

TS: Yeah, we didn't care, you know if they are going to come in and and give us bodily harm or something like that, why it's a different story. But I mean by words of mouth, we just give them a harsh word and just said "Stay away," that's all. And they sure did.

RW: I'm happy..you know everyone I've talked to has a kind of wonderfully ~~somewhat~~ different..each is like a separate picture.

TS: That's why I say, why ~~did~~ <sup>is it that</sup> the Japanese people have so much difference in opinion and <sup>they</sup> can't stick together. Why can't we correlate our whole feelings and say this is it okay now, let's see what the government will do. I think if we did that we would have been much stronger. But it wasn't that way. So many pro-Japanese..want to go back to Japan and <sup>all</sup> this and that..we were a small part of it of the pro situation. So everytime I tell about Tule Lake, they think I was one of those group.

RW: Let me ask this one: Is there any experience that is so strong, that it is something you could ~~never~~ forget, <sup>?</sup> ~~something~~ really...?

TS: Well, evacuation as a whole I would say. In my lifetime I don't think I will forgive what we had to go through. We had to sacrifice our farming business and economically we were coming back and make some money; well, we didn't have a chance. Another thing too, I wanted to go to school again, but one of those things that if we wanted to get out, we had to process papers and all this kind of stuff. So I finally stayed. If

I could gain something socially, I would take advantage of it, so I stayed with the church and did what I thought would be right.

RW: Do you feel, well, I have a question here, but you may have answered it: Looking back, is there anything <sup>in</sup> Tule <sup>that happened</sup> ~~in Tule Lake~~ that helped you to become a wiser or better person?

TS: Oh yeah. I would say getting along with people. I got rid of my shyness. I would speak freely.

~~RW: You were what?~~

TS: I will speak freely now, even in front of an audience. It doesn't bother me anymore.

RW: Yes, how should I say, people have said that they were sort of shy, and..but the experience at Tule Lake made them kind of a little tougher.

TS: That's right. It really did. We were able to speak for ourselves.

RW: Well, I'm very impressed by what you've told <sup>me...</sup>..I'd just like to ask now, what you did when you left and whether you left with your family and everything?

TS: <sup>No.</sup> <sup>Two</sup> The thing is my folks weren't rich that time. My bother and I, we're <sup>two</sup> years apart, <sup>So</sup> I told my dad, I said "We're going to go out and see if we can make some money." And all my friends went out too <sup>then</sup> already. We depended on one friend and we went to Idaho <sup>to</sup> ~~and~~ pick spuds for a while and well, we made good money. We came back..after we came back, in the meantime my folks were out too already and they went to the Sacramento area. It was a really sad situation <sup>because they were</sup> picking olive in wet, rainy weather and all that. When I came back, I looked for a little house and put our money down for a down payment, so we at least had a place to go to. That's what happened. My folks came back. We all got

~~got~~ together.

RW: That's nice. Did you then go to school or did you keep on working?

TS: Well, I kept working because my sister wanted to finish up school too. She had <sup>two</sup> years to go to nursing school.

RW: And you helped her through school?

TS: Yes. <sup>I put her through school, so</sup> After that I was working but I wasn't satisfied with what I wanted to do, ~~so I had to~~. Even before I got married I figured I better make up my mind what I'm going to do for a lifetime. So somebody pushed me to sell insurance, so I said I want to sell insurance. (laughs) ~~(?)~~

RW: How long has it been that you have been selling insurance?

TS: Oh this is my <sup>thirty-fourth</sup> year.

RW: <sup>thirty-fourth</sup> ~~34th~~ year. I'm glad to hear that.

TS: Any way I made up my mind; <sup>(?)</sup> ~~I got scared~~. We're making a living.

RW: ~~Let me see, I could ask~~ Since you've left the camp, <sup>have</sup> would you say ~~have~~ there been any really higher significant points in your life?

TS: Well, you know the thing is this: After the war had ended.. See, we faced a lot of discrimination prior to the war, Okay, so after the war, this feeling had changed a little bit. I mean so anyway, A lot of the Nisei and Sansei <sup>inter</sup> are able to/mingle with certain American businesses and all that. However, ~~there still~~, today, to this day, there is still some discrimination hanging around. I mean I feel it even selling insurance. I mean if I approach any white person, especially of English descent, no way I talk to. They are the worst ones. Excuse me if you are English now.

RW: You mean the people who come from England?

TS: Yeah. They're the worse.

RW: ~~They're the worse.~~ yes, there was a letter in the St. Louis  
Post Dispatch about <sup>two</sup> 2 years ago that came from California and was  
by some nut, ~~who~~..some white person, a Caucasian. He said there  
had never been any evacuation.

TS: Oh is that right?

RW: And I got so mad, ~~that~~ I wrote a nice letter to the Post  
and they published it, you know, I told it in brief. ~~I just ignored~~  
~~this letter and~~ I just told what had happened and how the whole  
short story, so I felt that I had done something for the people who  
had helped me.

TS: The thing is, I tell my kids too, the people have changed but  
if you want to get one more step up, they'll hold you down. I mean  
this is where the point is now. I mean you have to be an exceptional  
knowledged and know what you're doing and all that in order to get  
one step ahead of them. The plateau is there as far as trying to  
be of service to anybody, but I mean if you want to get beyond that  
plateau, that's where the tough part comes in. So I see that all  
the time.

RW: I think you're perfectly right. How many children do you have?

TS: 6. Six

RW: 6. ~~And~~ Well this is very good advice to give them. My  
husband is a Jew and his father, I think gave him much the same  
advice. If he was going to <sup>achieve</sup> ~~to~~..he would have to work harder.

TS: Oh yeah. We got to show that we a little bit better than  
the other person, or they are going to be able to push you around.

In the insurance agency business, I mean I find that. That's why you can't have that..I don't have the manager push me around. I tell ~~them~~<sup>him</sup> what to do.

RW: ~~Work.~~<sup>through my</sup> I have one last question to ask. This has come about ~~from~~ talking to people and trying to understand: Very often people who renounced their citizenship and went to Japan, and then of course, many came back here. They don't want to talk to me.

TS: Oh why?

RW: ~~And so~~ That's the question I ask myself. I can think of a lot of good reasons, but ~~I would~~. I'm just asking all the Japanese Americans I know if they have any suggestions <sup>as to</sup> why that would be. Are they scared or are they angry?

TS: You know the thing is like this now: A lot of people who went back are Kibeis. You know what Kibeis are? They are Kibeis<sup>to</sup> persons. To this day, some of those have <sup>not</sup> tried to acquire English knowledge they don't understand English yet.

RW: Aha.

TS: This is the reason why..you're asking me questions, I give you an answer. Most likely those people don't comprehend your questions. You see what I mean?

RW: That's a ~~wonderful~~ one I hadn't thought of. ~~I did talk..~~  
~~you know. I can't help conversing with you, because I respect you.~~  
I did talk to one Kibei who had gone to Japan and his English was so bad, you know, it was kind of embarrassing<sup>s</sup> for both of us, ~~and~~ this may very well be a good reason.

TS: This is the reason why that I'm <sup>thankful</sup> ~~grateful~~ that I went to Japanese school in Tule Lake. Although ~~we~~<sup>I</sup> went to Japanese school while we were going to grammar school, I think the Japanese I ~~had~~ (?) in the camp was more or less like a review, bringing me up to date.

So all the time I was there I had friends who helped me with my Japanese. ~~and~~ I never <sup>made</sup> a speech in Japanese either and these people said after segregation, "you better speak Japanese."

They would write me the so-called script there and I would memorize it and I gave it to the audience. I <sup>would to do</sup> ~~did~~ things like that. So presently, a lot of my policy holders are Japanese speaking

RW: ~~Did you say a lot of your customers were Japanese speaking people?~~

TS: Because I carry on the conversations in Japanese and they need help. See, they need help. And who's going to provide it? So some-time I feel I'm a social worker, because when they're in trouble - I've been to immigration to interpret and I've been in front of a judge to interpret.

RW: That's a very fine thing for you to be able to do.

TS: <sup>They're surprised</sup> ~~This applied~~ because I've never been to Japan.

RW: Yes. That you could learn Japanese so well.

TS: I feel thankful that I

End of side 2

### BEGINNING OF SIDE 3

RW: ~~I was going to say I didn't learn to use a tape recorder until 6 months ago, so sometimes I have to, I'm no expert.~~

~~But I've got it all going now.~~

You said this was an important thing, so I wanted to get it down.

What were you going to say?

TS: Learning Japanese in camp was one of my..nobody <sup>can</sup> ~~would~~ take it away from me and I'm able to use it now, which I'm actual <sup>I feel</sup> ~~thank~~ <sup>did</sup> grateful that I <sup>did</sup> strongly try to improve my Japanese and all that. It's really helped me out.

RW: Not only professionally, but in a human way in helping people.

TS: That's right.

RW: That's great.

TS: I feel grateful that I <sup>could at least</sup> ~~can~~ speak and help some other people. There are a lot of so-called Japanese refugees out here too, you know?

RW: ~~I didn't hear, what kind of Japanese?~~

TS: ~~The refugees.~~

RW: ~~Oh refugees.~~

TS: They're here from <sup>Maimoto (?)</sup> ~~Momoto~~ and Kabushima. So these are some of the people that I'm able to help anyway, especially the Japanese speaking people. I feel that I'm not that strong in Japanese but <sup>at least</sup> I can carry on..

RW: That's really very nice.

TS: So you were trying to interview some, they won't let you interview them, those person I <sup>they don't</sup> ~~don't~~ think comprehend what is being asked and then they can't carry on what to tell you. They're probably afraid <sup>that they</sup> ~~they~~ will say the wrong things or something.

RW: ~~Okay. If there is nothing else, I'll just say thank you.~~

TS: Okay.

RW: I learned a little Japanese, I'll thank you arrigato, gozai matsu. It's a bad accent. I have to practice it a little. I will..

TS: ~~Are~~ Are you in Salt Lake?

RW: I beg your pardon?

TS: Where are you residing at?

RW: I'm living in St. Louis.

TS: Oh St. Louis.

RW: I've got this small grant to do this study and write a report on how people are doing. And it just makes my heart feel so good when I talk to people like you who have sort of overcome this difficulty. God knows it was bad.

TS: I try to live a simple and positive type of living. I don't try to be negative and get myself depressed and all that. That's not the way I like to live.

RW: That's good. Also your wife gave me your brother's telephone number, so I'll talk to him.

TS: Yeah. I was there last spring and I was talking to his in-laws and his in-laws never faced the evacuation, so they don't know any thing about it. I was telling them about how we were..something like I was telling you, but they say, "Why don't you go in front of the redress group?" I said, "No, I don't want to do that."

RW: Since I'm not Japanese my view is what <sup>that</sup> was done to the Japanese was very terrible, but what they chose to do <sup>that</sup> is their business.

TS: That's right.

RW: See, I'm not going to advise. That's it.

TS: Okay. Nice talking to you.

RW: Thank you very much.

End of interview # 48

~~XXXXXXXX~~

Thomas ~~Sam~~ Sawada

~~XXXXXX~~

Thomas Sawada, an Old Tulean, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

~~XXXXXX~~ told me that he had refused to answer the Military Questionnaire.

~~He~~ However, he did not renounced his citizenship and he was about 25 years old when the ~~war~~ war ended. I asked him what he did when he left Tule Lake. He responded:

TS: ~~No.~~ The thing is my folks weren't rich that time. My brother and I, we're two years apart. So I told my dad, I said 'We're going to go out and see if we can make some money.' And all my friends went out too then already. We depended on one friend and we went to Idaho to pick spuds for a while and ~~well~~, we made good money. ~~We came back.~~

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#### CHANGE TAPE

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